

ISSN 2651-8988

Journal of Vampire Studies

Volume 3 • 2023

VAMPIRE STUDIES ASSOCIATION

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See inside front cover.

Journal of Vampire Studies, Volume 3

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ISSN: 2651-8988

ISBN: 978-0-6452034-3-1

Published annually on behalf of the Vampire Studies Association (ABN 96 775 755 325), PO Box 3005, Syndal, VIC 3149. For more information about the VSA, visit <https://vampirestudies.org>.

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Subscription Information: Not currently available, but under consideration.

Correspondence: For all business and editorial correspondence, email Anthony Hogg at thevampirologist@gmail.com. State purpose of contact in subject line.

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Submission Fee: No submission fees are charged for manuscript submissions.

Indexing: Content indexed in MLA International Bibliography.

Advertising Policy: Limited space available for advertising. Only non-fiction vampire books, periodicals, conferences, lectures and courses will be considered.

Information for Authors: Please refer to Notes for Contributors in this issue for editorial policy, submission guidelines, and formatting instructions for manuscript submissions.

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Patriarchal Blood Rituals and the Vampire Archetype

LLOYD D. GRAHAM

Independent scholar, Australia

ABSTRACT: Correspondences can be identified between (on the one hand) androcentric cosmogonies, ancestral misogyny and tribal blood rituals, and (on the other) the classical paradigm of vampirism, especially in its literary and on-screen flowering. Specifically, the initiatory culture-hero and the archetypal vampire both confer a haematologically-mediated rebirth, via an ancient male, into an intrinsically masculine eternity. Such parallels could account for the success of the senior male vampire as an enduring archetype in the popular imagination.

KEYWORDS: tribal initiation · blood ritual · ancestral culture-hero · patriarchy · misogyny · rebirth from the male

WARNING: Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are respectfully advised that this paper contains information which would be restricted or prohibited in many communities. This information—which relates to men's rituals—has been translated from anthropology publications written in foreign languages or reprised from older anthropology publications written in English.

This article seeks to establish a set of correspondences, not hitherto remarked as an ensemble,¹ between (on the one hand) androcentric cosmogonies, ancestral misogyny and tribal blood rituals, and (on the other) the classical paradigm of vampirism, especially in its literary and on-screen flowering. It is suggested that the parallels between these two domains have contributed to the success of the senior male vampire as an enduring archetype in the popular imagination.

Mythology and Patriarchy

In many pre-industrial societies, men appropriated to themselves what they saw as the positive aspects of the female (fertility, creation and life), leaving women with the negative aspects (perishability, death and decay).² This act of male usurpation did not go unnoticed; we find that many traditional peoples have myths that describe how spiritual and social power—often symbolised by secret/sacred objects³—once

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1. After drafting this paper, I discovered that some parallels between vampirism and blood-based rituals of tribal initiation had already been recognised by Walter Evans, "Monster Movies and Rites of Initiation," *Journal of Popular Film* 4, no. 2 (1975): 124–42. His observations are acknowledged and discussed in my penultimate paragraph.
 2. Michele Stephen, "Male Mothers and Cannibal Women: A Kleinian Interpretation of Male Initiation in the New Guinea Highlands," *Psychoanalytic Review* 90, no. 5 (October 2003): 615–53.
 3. Frequently, as Stephen, 615–53, and the references in notes 4–8 below reveal, the secret/sacred objects are musical instruments. These all bear sexual symbolism, for their sacredness is derived from the "sacred character of matriarchy, founded on the maternal

belonged to the women but was stolen from them by the men, who still control it today.⁴ One can adduce examples from Papua New Guinea,⁵ Australia,⁶ South America,⁷ and Africa.⁸ A similar motif is found in many creation myths from the Mediterranean and ancient Near East. Accordingly, “The Greek and Babylonian myths closely resemble each other, since in both the main character at the center of the plot is the great mother (Tiamat, Gaea, or similarly, Anat, Baal’s mate in the Ugaritic myth), and in each instance power is transferred, after a bloody struggle, to a male god who rules the world.”⁹ Later Greek myths, such as those recounting the defeat of the female Amazons by the misogynistic culture-heroes Heracles and Theseus, reprise the theme.¹⁰ In Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, matriarchy results in “the equation of the female with sterility and death”¹¹ which, naturally, requires that it be

generative mystery;” Joan Bamberger, “The Myth of Matriarchy: Why Men Rule in Primitive Society,” in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974), 264, 272.

4. Seymour Parker and Hilda Parker, “The Myth of Male Superiority: Rise and Demise,” *American Anthropologist* 81, no. 2 (June 1979): 292; and Froma I. Zeitlin, “The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the *Oresteia*,” *Arethusa* 11, no. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 1978): 151–52, 160.
5. Andrew Lattas, “Trickery and Sacrifice: Tambarans and the Appropriation of Female Reproductive Powers in Male Initiation Ceremonies in West New Britain,” *Man* 24, no. 3 (September 1989): 451–69, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2802701>; and Francisco Vaz da Silva, *Archeology of Intangible Heritage* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 55–56.
6. Alain Testart “Des Rhombes et des *tjurunga*: La question des objets sacrés en Australie” [Bullroarers and *tjurunga*: The question of sacred objects in Australia], *L’Homme* 33, no. 125 (January–March 1993): 32–35; Sylvie Poirier, *A World of Relationships: Itineraries, Dreams, and Events in the Australian Western Desert* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 204; and Christine Watson, *Piercing the Ground: Balgo Women’s Image Making and Relationship to Country* (Freemantle: Freemantle Arts Centre Press, 2003), 173–78.
7. Bamberger, “Myth of Matriarchy,” 268–80; and Yolanda Murphy and Robert F. Murphy, *Women of the Forest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 87–95, <https://archive.org/details/womenofforestooooomurp>.
8. Toyin Falola and Nana Akua Amponsah, *Women’s Roles in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2012), 86–87.
9. Adriel Kosman, *Gender and Dialogue in the Rabbinic Prism*, trans. Edward Levin (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 163–64.
10. Zeitlin, “Dynamics of Misogyny,” 151.
11. Zeitlin, 159. The murdered female matriarch is represented by three avenging Erinyes (or Furies), three proto-vampiric females “who would pursue and suck the blood from their living victim” (Zeitlin, 159; see also Ruth Scodel, *An Introduction to Greek Tragedy* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 96), and who therefore anticipate by millennia the three vampire women (commonly referred to as “brides”) in Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, ed., intro. and notes Maurice Hindle (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 52–56, https://archive.org/details/draculaooooostok_v3f6. The Furies originally sprang from blood that fell from the severed genitals of the supreme patriarch Uranus, whose castration was orchestrated by his wife, the earth-mother Gaea (Glenn W. Most, trans., *Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006], 17–21, <https://archive.org/details/hesiod-hesiod>); accordingly, they constitute the epitome of the “matriarchal dysfunction.” That the female vampire has always been a less comfortable (and thus less popular) paradigm than her male counterpart may simply reflect the endur-

replaced by a fecundating patriarchy.¹² When the matricidal son Orestes is ritually reborn at the male-appropriated “world womb” of Delphi, “The implication of the scene is of rebirth from the male.”¹³

Myths empower through ritual, and the rites of traditional societies typically serve to justify and legitimise patriarchal authority. As Francisco Vaz da Silva explains, “Anthropologists have long ago realized that institutionalized attempts by men to figuratively fulfill female functions . . . reveal that men’s social authority involves symbolical appropriation of feminine power.”¹⁴ Thus, in traditional societies, we often find a paradox whereby “sexuality is . . . opposed to fertility. It is associated with flesh, decomposition and women, while true ancestral fertility is a mystical process symbolised by the tomb and the (male) bones.”¹⁵ Thus, for the Merina people of Madagascar, “physical birth – which is represented as an exclusively female activity – is polluting, and is subsequently transcended by the circumcision ceremony at which the child is torn away from the divisive and impure world of women to be born into the pure and undivided world of the [male] descent group.”¹⁶ The belief structure of the Lugbara of Uganda and the Bara of Madagascar “identifies women with sexuality and sexuality with death. Victory over death . . . is symbolically achieved by a victory over female sexuality and the world of women.”¹⁷

In keeping with this paradigm, mythology typically portrays the afterlife as a masculine realm. In the Mesopotamian underworld, the only happy adults were the fathers with many sons.¹⁸ The abduction of Persephone by Hades, ruler of the Hellenistic netherworld, shows the extent to which the Greeks considered his domain to be a man’s world.¹⁹ Every ancient Egyptian hoped to become “an Osiris” after their death, but—despite periodic suggestions to the contrary—this assimilation to the male god does not seem to have required women to switch gender.²⁰ Nevertheless, to effect a woman’s rebirth into the afterlife, her Osirian form “acted as her own husband, her own wife, and her own mother. The depictions of herself in tomb decoration . . . stimulated her (male) fertility,”²¹ since—in death, as in

-ing patriarchal bias of all human societies—but this is to get ahead of the main argument.

12. Zeitlin, “Dynamics of Misogyny,” 159–60.

13. Zeitlin, 166–69.

14. Silva, *Archeology*, 51.

15. Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry, eds., *Death and the Regeneration of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 21. On the universal maleness of bones, and their identification with sperm/ semen, see Silva, *Archeology*, 15–16.

16. Bloch and Parry, *Death*, 24.

17. Bloch and Parry, 22.

18. Andrew George, trans., *The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 1999; London: Penguin Books, 2003), 177, 187–89. Citation refers to Penguin Books edition.

19. Steve Eddy and Claire Hamilton, *Understand Greek Mythology* (London: Hodder Education, 2012), 73–86.

20. Mark Smith, *Following Osiris: Perspectives on the Osirian Afterlife from Four Millennia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 211–16.

21. Ann Macy Roth, “Father Earth, Mother Sky: Ancient Egyptian Beliefs about Conception

life—"the creative role is attached exclusively to the male sex."²² We see the truth of this last statement in the recurring central drama of New Kingdom religion, i.e. the nightly union of the (male) sungod, Re, with the (male) Lord of the Dead, Osiris, in the Netherworld. This could be envisaged as a sexual encounter, with either Re or Osiris providing the womb in which the solar child would then gestate prior to his rebirth at the next sunrise.²³ For women in post-Pharaonic Egypt, female-to-male transgenering was presented as conducive to eternal life in the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* (ca. second century CE); there Jesus says: "For every female who makes herself male will enter heaven's kingdom."²⁴

Blood Rituals: Tribal and Vampiric

In the world of the living, feminine generative power is often symbolised by blood.²⁵ For example, among Australian Aborigines, one of the sacred objects restricted to men is the bullroarer, an aerophone instrument important in male rituals.²⁶ According to Alain Testart, the vulva-shaped and red ochre-coated bullroarer is in fact "le symbole de l'intériorité sanglante des femmes mais détachée de celles-ci, il est le symbole d'une intériorité dont les pouvoirs sont niés pour autant que les femmes sont concernées, et dont l'efficacité a été reportée sur les hommes"²⁷ (the symbol of the bloody interiority of women but detached from them; it is the symbol of an interiority whose powers are denied as far as women are concerned, and whose effectiveness has been transferred to men).²⁸ In initiation ceremonies, it is "l'utilisation rituelle de leur sang dont sont aspergés les initiés tout autant qu'ils sont enduits d'ocre rouge"²⁹ (the ritual use of the men's blood, with which initiates are sprinkled just as much as they are coated with red ochre), that ensures the rebirth of the boys into the world of men; they achieve true life through "le remplacement d'un sang féminin (incapable) par un sang masculin fonctionnant (capable) selon les facultés féminines"³⁰ (the replacement of female blood [incapable] by male blood [capable] which functions according to feminine principles).

and Fertility," in *Reading the Body: Representations and Remains in the Archaeological Record*, ed. Alison E. Rautman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 199.

22. Roth, 189.

23. Nehad Kamal El-deen, "The Unification of Re and Osiris in the Netherworld," *Yearbook of the General Union of Arab Archaeologists* [in Arabic], no. 13 (2010): 62–84, art. 125, <https://dx.doi.org/10.21608/cguaa.2010.37714>.

24. Marvin Meyer, trans., *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 63 (logion 114).

25. Testart, "Rhombes et des *tjurunga*," 40, 43, 54, 56.

26. Testart, 35–45; and Serge Schoffel, *Dreamtime Records: An Early Art of the First Australians* (Brussels: Serge Schoffel – Art Premier, 2020), 9–10, <https://sergeschoffel.com/uploads/publications/dreamtime-light.pdf>.

27. Testart, "Rhombes et des *tjurunga*," 46.

28. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

29. Testart, 44.

30. Testart, 45.

In Central Australia, another male ritual object—the *tjurunga*—resembles the bullroarer in appearance and, like the latter, is coated periodically with a mixture of fat and red ochre symbolising female blood.³¹ Acquired some years after initiation,³² it is considered by Testart to extend and complete the male appropriation of female fertility by providing an exclusively masculine paradigm for human reproduction, one in which an ancestor-derived spirit-child emanates from the *tjurunga* and incarnates as an embryo in a nearby woman.³³ In this revisionist view of conception, all aspects of the “female” physiological process (interior, wet) have been inverted (external, dry),³⁴ as if female genitalia have been transformed into male ones—a change reflected in the elongated shapes of most *tjurunga*.³⁵

Similarly, in classic examples of vampirism, one sees a negation of female agency in favour of male power; it is perhaps no accident that Count Orlok in Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922) looks “like a penis with teeth.”³⁶ The archetypal Gothic vampire is a domineering older male³⁷—one whose suave looks may belie his true antiquity³⁸—

31. Testart, 46–47, 54–57.

32. Testart, 47; and Schoffel, *Dreamtime Records*, 10.

33. Testart, “Rhombes et des *tjurunga*,” 50, 54, 59.

34. Testart, 54–56, 60.

35. Schoffel, *Dreamtime Records*, 17. Although—as we shall see—the presence of a ready-made body for the undead “offspring” means that vampire propagation has no need of processes beyond the blood ritual analogous to tribal initiation, it does share one key feature with *tjurunga*-mediated conception in that both involve a cephalic contribution from the male (see note 56 below). Moreover, the properties of the *tjurunga* (= *churinga*) in Aboriginal culture have been likened to those of the corpse and of the undead in Western societies. Marika Moisseff, “Cadavres et churinga: Des objets culturels exemplaires?” [Corpses and churinga: Exemplary cult objects?], *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 61, no. 174 (April–June 2016), 255–78; vampire reference, 274.

36. *Nightmare: The Birth of Horror*, episode 2, “Dracula,” directed by Derek Towers, researched, written and presented by Christopher Frayling, aired December 18, 1996, on BBC 1, quoted in Ivan Phillips, “The Vampire with a Thousand Faces: Towards a Physiognomy of the Undead” (paper presented at the “Vampires: Myths of the Past and the Future” conference, Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, University of London, London, November 3, 2011), [12], <https://www.academia.edu/1101773>. In other expressions of pure maleness, rising from the dead has been equated with penile erection and the vampiric visit has been likened to a nocturnal emission. Theodor Reik, *Ritual: Psycho-Analytic Studies*, trans. Douglas Bryan (London: Leonard & Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press / Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1931), 125; and Ernest Jones, *On the Nightmare* (London: Leonard & Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press / Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1931), 119–20.

37. On domination and coercion by the male vampire, see Marie Levesque, “The Figure of the Vampire as an Emblem of Tradition” (Master’s thesis, University of Montreal, 2014), 32, 70–72, 90–91. As per Marta Miquel-Baldellou, “From Pathology to Invisibility: The Discourse of Ageing in Vampire Fiction,” in “Ageing and Fiction,” ed. Emma Filtness, Nick Hubble, Joseph Norman and Serena Volpi, special issue, *EnterText*, no. 12 (2014), <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/creative-writing/research/entertext/documents/entertextno12/6-enter-text-ageing-baldellou-from-pathology-to-invisibility-the-discourse-of-ageing-in-vampire-fiction.pdf>, the literary vampire also had “a remarkable aged appearance during the Victorian period” (abstract, 102) when it was “the embodiment of pathology” (abstract), and “early portraits of the vampire in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and its cinematic counterpart in

who preys on both sexes, but especially on women. He draws female blood into himself, makes it his own, and finally returns a token amount of the transformed elixir to his victims, thereby binding them to himself and, in many cases, bestowing upon them his own nature. This haematological motif has folkloric antecedents. From the late seventeenth century onward, it was believed in Slavic and adjacent lands that attacks by a vampire could be curtailed by ingesting blood extracted from the relevant corpse, blood which was consumed either as a liquid or after including it in bread.³⁹ Sufficient protection might be conferred merely by eating soil from the vampire's grave and/or smearing the corpse's blood on the skin of the person seeking relief;⁴⁰ either way, the transfer of blood (or its substitute) was from vampire to victim.⁴¹ The usual down-side of these actions was that the recipient was then condemned to become a vampire after their own demise,⁴² irrespective of when or how they died.⁴³ For example, in Medveđa (southern Serbia) in 1731,⁴⁴ we are told of "A woman by the name of Stana, twenty years old, who had died in child-birth three

Murnau's *Nosferatu* depict the vampire as an eminently old man who is truly even older than he actually looks" (102). See also Stoker, *Dracula*, 25–28.

38. "It is through deceit that the vampire pretends to be young, despite its blatant actual old age." Miquel-Baldellou, "Pathology to Invisibility," 95. Beyond this, the geriatric vampire of the Victorian period has given way over time to ever younger embodiments of the species in prose and film (abstract).
39. Augustin Calmet, *Traité sur les apparitions des esprits et sur les vampires ou les revenans de Hongrie, de Moravie, &c.* [Treatise on the apparitions of spirits and on the vampires or revenants of Hungary and Moravia, etc.] (Paris: Debure, 1751), 2:60–61; Paul Barber, "Forensic Pathology and the European Vampire," *Journal of Folklore Research* 24, no. 1 (1987): 24, 32n128, 32n130; and Thomas M. Bohn, *The Vampire: Origins of a European Myth*, trans. Francis Ipgrave (New York: Berghahn, 2019), 60–61, 138–46. The juxtaposition of bread and blood conjures up images of an anti-Eucharist or "Unholy Communion."
40. Barber, "Forensic Pathology," 24, including n129; Johnson, "Count Dracula," comparison 3; Bohn, *Vampire*, 3, 87, 147, 195–196; Ádám Mézes, "Georg Tallar and the 1753 Vampire Hunt: Administration, Medicine and the Returning Dead in the Habsburg Banat," in *The Magical and Sacred Medical World*, ed. Éva Pócs (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2019), 116; and Ádám Mézes, "Vampire Contagion as a Forensic Fact: The Vampires of Medveđa in 1732," *Historical Studies on Central Europe* 1, no. 1 (2021): 160.
41. Of course, such practices were likely to result in illness and/or death, thereby greatly inflating the toll attributable to the vampire. Mézes, "Georg Tallar," 116. When baked into bread (e.g. Calmet, *Traité sur les apparitions*, 2:60–61), the high temperature should have killed any pathogens but probably did not neutralise their toxins.
42. Contra Patrick Johnson, "Count Dracula and the Folkloric Vampire: Thirteen Comparisons," *Journal of Dracula Studies*, no. 3 (2001): 35, who seems unaware of the price that must ultimately be paid for consuming the blood of a vampire.
43. For example, Arnond Paole (= Arnold Paul = Arnaut Pavle), who was blamed soon after his demise in 1727 for several deaths in Medveđa in southern Serbia, had in life been harassed by a vampire in Kosovo. To protect himself, Paole had eaten soil from the vampire's grave and had smeared himself with the corpse's blood. Bohn, *Vampire*, 87; and Johnson, "Count Dracula," 35. Although doing this granted Paole immunity against his tormentor while alive, it "also meant that he would inevitably turn into a vampire after his death," as indeed he did after a fatal fall from a hay-wagon. Mézes, "Georg Tallar," 99; Mézes, "Vampire Contagion," 166–67.
44. Mézes, "Vampire Contagion," 158, 160.

months before, after a three-day sickness, and who had said before her death that she had painted herself with the blood of a vampire in order to be free of him, wherefore she herself, like her child . . . must also become vampires.”⁴⁵

The motif of vampire-to-victim blood transfer was first applied to the literary vampire in Bram Stoker’s seminal novel, *Dracula* (1897). A traumatised Mina Harker relates the aged Count’s actions after he had slaked his thirst on her blood:

“Then he spoke to me mockingly, . . . “And you, their best beloved one, are now to me, flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin; my bountiful wine-press for a while; and shall be later on my companion and my helper. . . . You have aided in thwarting me; now you shall come to my call. When my brain says ‘Come!’ to you, you shall cross land or sea to do my bidding; and to that end, this!” With that he pulled open his shirt, and with his long sharp nails opened a vein in his breast. When the blood began to spurt out, he took my hands in one of his, holding them tight, and with the other seized my neck and pressed my mouth to the wound, so that I must either suffocate or swallow some of the – Oh my God! my God! what have I done? What have I done to deserve such a fate, I who have tried to walk in meekness and righteousness all my days. God pity me! Look down on a poor soul in worse than mortal peril; and in mercy pity those to whom she is dear!”⁴⁶

Such actions have a clear parallel in the male initiation ceremonies of Aboriginal Australia.⁴⁷ As the anthropologist A. P. Elkin explains, in an early ritual the elders perform bodily operations on the novices (circumcision, sub-incision, etc.) which shed their blood.⁴⁸ A subsequent ceremony

consists of anointing the newly initiated with arm-blood from the older men, or else giving them some of this to drink. The older men also anoint themselves or each other and drink blood. This blood is sacred; there is a secret name for it, and it is usually associated with some mythical hero’s act. It gives life, strength and courage and so fits the candidates for the revelations which are to be made. At the same time it unites them to the elders of whose blood they have partaken; indeed, it does more; it unites them to the initiation heroes, for the blood taken under such conditions is the hero’s

45. Barber, “Forensic Pathology,” 2. The initial vampire of Medveda, Armond Paole, is described in note 43 above. The law of contagion—a principle of sympathetic magic—meant that the child was doomed by its intimate association with Stana’s vampire-tainted body. Mézes, “Vampire Contagion,” 160.

46. Stoker, *Dracula*, 370–71.

47. As a continuation of note 1, I should acknowledge that the resemblance was mentioned in passing by Evans, “Rites of Initiation,” 136; his observations are discussed in my penultimate paragraph. Incidentally, as of late 2021, the usually separate worlds of Aboriginal Australia and vampire predation find themselves juxtaposed in the AMC+ television series *Firebite*. See Luke Buckmaster, “Firebite Review: Warwick Thornton’s Exhilarating Vampire Series Will Have You Hooked,” review of *Firebite*, AMC+ (US), created by Warwick Thornton and Brendan Fletcher, *Guardian* (Australia edition), December 15, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2021/dec/15/firebite-review-warwick-thorntons-exhilarating-vampire-series-will-have-you-hooked>.

48. Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them*, 4th ed. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1964), 197–98, 204–5, https://archive.org/details/australianaborig/ooooapel_d3v3.

or ancestor's life, and so to drink it, brings the initiated into the mythical world.⁴⁹

The actions of the vampire and tribal elder are clearly similar in form,⁵⁰ and even the perceived difference in morality may be an illusion.⁵¹ However, under no circumstances should this parallel be used in a misguided or malicious manner to defame Aboriginal or other First Nations peoples;⁵² it merely points to the existence of a deep-rooted cultural template that spans both pre- and post-industrial human societies.

Many literary paradigms of vampirism require a reciprocal exchange of blood between vampire and host, like that between Dracula and Mina, in order to bestow immortality upon the victim. As with traditional initiation ceremonies, the death and rebirth of the neophyte (in this case, into eternal undeath) is achieved by an initial withdrawal of blood from the junior party, followed by a symbolic or actual consumption of the magically potent blood of the elder male. This is the case in Ann Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* (1976–2018), where the “Dark Gift/Trick” is essential to creating a new vampire.⁵³ The necessity for reciprocal blood exchange in “siring” a new vampire was also retained in—and greatly popularised by—the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003).⁵⁴ In Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* (2005–2020), a vampire's bite infects the victim with a venom that will transform them into a vampire if it does not kill them;⁵⁵ absorption of this venom is, of course, analogous

49. Elkin, 206.

50. The parallels between the senior vampire and tribal elder become even more marked in Ann Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* (1976–2018), given that “her vampires go through a thorough training process with their sire once the transformation is completed” in order to understand the collective origins and traditions of their community, including its secret/sacred mysteries. Levesque, “Figure of the Vampire,” 41; see also 43, 62–64, 93.

51. While the elders are ostensibly helping the novices by fortifying them to withstand the attacks of a supernatural predator, it is actually they who are terrifying and inflicting pain on their charges. Reik contends that, in retaliation for the Oedipal desires of their sons, “The fathers identify themselves with the balum monster. It is they who harbour those wicked impulses against the neophytes which are ascribed to the monster.” Ritual, 104–6. Reciprocally, we might note that “in *Dracula*, Stoker makes . . . a quite blatant demonstration of the Oedipus complex” with the eponymous Count in the role of vengeful father. Maurice Richardson, “The Psychoanalysis of Ghost Stories,” *Twentieth Century* 166, no. 994 (December 1959): 427, https://archive.org/details/sim_twentieth-century_1959-12_166_994.

52. Racist slurs denigrating male elders from tribal cultures as vampires would be as absurd as they would be odious.

53. Levesque, “Figure of the Vampire,” 28–30, 44; and Julia O'Connell [TheGothicLibrarian, pseud.], “The Ever-Changing Characteristics of Vampires,” *Gothic Library* (blog), August 24, 2020, <https://www.thegothiclibrary.com/the-ever-changing-characteristics-of-vampires/>.

54. In season 1, episode 1, “Welcome to the Hellmouth,” Buffy pertly explains that “To make you a vampire they have to suck your blood. And then you have to suck their blood. It's like a whole big sucking thing. Mostly they're just gonna kill you.” “Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Season 1 Quotes,” Quotes.net, accessed December 31, 2021, <https://www.quotes.net/show-quote/11828>.

55. O'Connell, “Ever-Changing Characteristics.”

to the ingestion of vampire blood by victims in the other paradigms.

A Masculine Template

In all cases, vampiric rebirth is achieved via biting/sucking and is thus mediated by the head—such mediation being a trope common to “male-only” conception/birth paradigms from sources as disparate as Greek myth and indigenous Australian belief.⁵⁶ Moreover teeth, by being white like bones, brains and semen, are mythologically male.⁵⁷ As hard white projections from the head, teeth are identified both with male ancestral bones and—like animal horns—with male potency,⁵⁸ and are thus a uniquely masculine synthesis of both *thanatos* and *eros*. In nature, elongated canine teeth are a male prerogative,⁵⁹ while in supernature, “Dracula’s fangs . . . are borderline phallic symbols.”⁶⁰

While literature does afford a number of female vampires—Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1871–72) provides an early example—and while modern storytellers have brought countless innovations to the genre,⁶¹ the stereotypical vampire in the

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56. For ancient Greece, subsequent to the goddess Athena’s birth from the head of Zeus, “male generative creativity is displaced from phallos to head;” Zeitlin, “Dynamics of Misogyny,” 169. Likewise, for Central Australia, Testart “Rhombes et des *tjurunga*,” 57, speaks of “l’équivalence . . . entre tête et *tjurunga*” (the equivalence . . . between head and *tjurunga*), where the latter is the ancestral and ultimately phallic reservoir of spirit-children awaiting incarnation (see note 35 above). Any “rebirth into undeath” that requires the vampire’s bite to be reciprocated via the ingestion of its blood by the victim is, of course, doubly cephalic.
 57. Gil Anidjar, “We Have Never Been Jewish: An Essay in Asymmetric Hematology,” in *Jewish Blood: Reality and Metaphor in History, Religion and Culture*, ed. Mitchell B. Hart (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 38.
 58. Silva, *Archeology*, 16–17. Justin Glenn, “Tooth Symbolism in Herodotus,” *Psychoanalytic Review* 65, no. 3 (1978): 471–73, exposes the long history of tooth-phallus equivalence in symbolism.
 59. Parker and Parker, “Myth of Male Superiority,” 297.
 60. Oliver Tearle, “The Curious Symbolism of Teeth in Literature and Religion,” *Interesting Literature* (blog), [July 2021], <https://interestingliterature.com/2021/07/teeth-symbolism-in-literature-religion-myth-meaning-analysis/>. See also Levesque, “Figure of the Vampire,” 25–26, 74, 90, 94.
 61. In addition to the formerly latent romantic intrigue and sexual tension/transgression having been made explicit, the genre has been modernised by endowing vampires with complex personalities, existential angst, soulful remorse, and other sensitivities. Indeed, over the past forty years, the male vampire of literature, cinema and television has undergone a progressive emasculation, such that he “is no longer strong, proud, and supreme. He is found to be soft, emotional, and unable to resist the humanism which arose during the mid-19th century.” R. J. Jacob, “Vampires without Teeth,” *Attack the System*, October 31, 2012, <https://attackthesystem.com/2012/10/31/vampires-who-dont-drink-blood/>. For similar sentiments, see Veronica Hollinger, “The Vampire and the Alien: Gothic Horror and Science Fiction,” in *Bram Stoker’s “Dracula”: Sucking through the Century, 1897–1997*, ed. Carol M. Davison; with the participation of Paul Simpson-Housley (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 225–26; and Kristian Pérez Zurutuza, “Images of Diluted Masculinity of Contemporary Vampire Characters through Racial Discourse in Modern

popular imagination remains that of the senior (if deceptively spry) male bloodsucker with a commanding presence who preferentially preys on young women.⁶² This undoubtedly reflects the formative influence of Stoker's *Dracula* on the vampire genre,⁶³ but to enquire no further would be to overlook the deep psychological resonance of the cliché. Firstly, psychoanalysis has long recognised the detailed "correspondence between myths and ritual observances of ancient societies and the fantasy material of modern individuals."⁶⁴ Secondly, enduring literary and cinematic tropes succeed because they provide a "response to some inexplicable, deep-seated, and unsatisfied cravings in the audience."⁶⁵ Thirdly, even modern Western societies retain a patriarchal bias, and the continuing infatuation (of both sexes) with the authoritarian and androcentric empires of past civilizations has recently led a female Egyptologist, Prof. Kara Cooney, to ask whether our "deep obsessions with the ancient world . . . are really symptoms of an ongoing addiction to male power that we just can't kick?"⁶⁶ Given these three premises, I would suggest that the archetypal status of the domineering male vampire derives, in part,⁶⁷ from the fact that his

American Gothic," *International Journal of Arts & Sciences* 9, no. 2 (2016): 335–56, <http://www.universitypublications.net/ijas/0902/pdf/M6K33.pdf>.

62. E.g., Benson Saler and Charles A. Ziegler, "*Dracula* and *Carmilla*: Mythmaking and the Mind," in *Vampires: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*, ed. Carla T. Kungl (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2003), 17–20; Phillips, "Vampire with a Thousand Faces," [1]; and Evans, "Rites of Initiation," 142n27.
63. "The Count became so embedded in people's imagination – even centuries later – that he became the vampire by which all other vampiric figures are eventually measured." Levesque, "Figure of the Vampire," 12. Similar sentiments abound outside academia, e.g. "Dracula has become the definitive vampire archetype; an iconic, instantly recognisable figure, referenced, parodied, pastiched and paid homage to in a myriad different ways." Steve Balshaw, "Bram Stoker Centenary: The Creation of *Dracula* – Part One," *Mancunian Matters*, July 17, 2012, <https://www.mancunianmatters.co.uk/life/17072012-bram-stoker-centenary-the-creation-of-dracula-part-one/>. It is worth reiterating that Stoker's *Dracula* had a visibly aged body (note 37 above).
64. Joseph L. Henderson, *Thresholds of Initiation* (1967; repr., Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1979), 11; <https://archive.org/details/thresholdsofinitooohend>, similarly, 107.
65. Evans, "Rites of Initiation," 133.
66. Alison Hewitt, "Renowned Egyptologist Says It's Time to Stop Romanticizing Ancient Egypt," news release, UCLA, December 6, 2021, <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/egyptologist-kara-cooney-good-kings-book>. Ancient Egypt has particular relevance to the current discussion because two of its defining characteristics are the androcentric and autocratic nature of Egyptian kingship and the culture's extraordinary preoccupation with death and the afterlife, the latter being ruled (as noted earlier in the main text) by the male god Osiris. While one might expect an authoritarian patriarchy fixated upon post-mortem gratification to be distasteful to some males and most females in modern liberal democracies, the ancient Egypt of popular (and, in Cooney's view, scholarly) imagination is instead a magnificent and alluring construct. Of course, in vampiric patriarchies, death and post-mortem gratification are a given and the master-vampire's power is most often absolute. On the latter, see Levesque, "Figure of the Vampire," 37.
67. There are, of course, innumerable other resonances. For example, his cachet as a seducer and sexual corrupter of naïve and impressionable girls makes him a cautionary figure in a societal allegory. See Walter Evans, "Monster Movies: A Sexual Theory," *Journal of Popular*

behaviour conforms to the pattern established by the masculine culture-heroes of world mythology, those misogynistic male instigators—whether gods or ancestors—whose patriarchal legacy dominates the world’s pre-industrial societies and lurks just beneath the surface of its post-industrial ones.⁶⁸

Conclusion

Some parallels between vampirism and blood-based rituals of tribal initiation were previously recognised by Walter Evans.⁶⁹ Most pertinently, he says: “[A. P.] Elkin reveals that among the rituals nearly every Australian initiate undergoes one of the most important is the ‘blood ceremony,’ one which parallels the periodic bloodlettings monster movies associate with werewolves and especially vampires.”⁷⁰ Evans’ overall thesis is that “Monster movies respond to a deep cultural need largely ignored in Western society, the need for rituals of initiation,”⁷¹ but the focus of his paper—which spans all kinds of monster but is restricted to cinema—is quite different to the present one. His paradigm concerns not the mature male monster and his young female victim but the young male hero-to-be (with whom the target audience identifies)⁷² and his venerable male mentor (“the Van Helsing figure”).⁷³ Accordingly, Evans makes no mention of the primeval gender antagonism that is integral to the symbolism of blood in the tribal and vampire contexts, does not consider the related traditions attached to the folkloric vampire, and places quite a different interpretation on the age/sex dimension to the canonical literary/filmic vampire and his prey.⁷⁴

To sum up, we have seen that the archetypal vampire and the initiatory culture-hero have much in common. Both carry the authority of antiquity: the vampire through his preternaturally great age and ancient pedigree,⁷⁵ the culture-hero

Film 2, no. 4 (Fall 1973): 361–63.

68. Recognition and rejection of the misogyny underpinning the archetype is of course what has compelled more recent creators of vampire fiction—especially female authors—to increasingly emasculate and feminise their male leads, as acknowledged in note 61 above. With the emergence of the peppy young female Slayer as a triumphant nemesis for the odious older male vampire (Debra Jackson, “Throwing Like a Slayer: A Phenomenology of Gender Hybridity and Female Resilience in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*,” *Slayage* 14, no. 1 [43] [Winter 2016], https://www.whedonstudies.tv/uploads/2/6/2/8/26288593/jackson_slayage_14.1.pdf), the subversion of the patriarchal trope really ought to have been complete—yet the Dracula figure remains such a deeply ingrained touchstone in the collective psyche that, like a true vampire, it refuses to die.
69. Evans, “Rites of Initiation.”
70. Evans, 135.
71. Evans, 124–25.
72. Evans, 125–26.
73. Evans, 127.
74. Evans, 142n27; see also note 67 above.
75. This lineage may be aristocratic, vampiric, or both. Alluding to both his age and his human ancestry, Dracula says: “Here I am noble; I am *boyar*; the common people know

through his presence *in illo tempore* and the re-enactment of his deeds by the grizzled tribal “law man.”⁷⁶ Both protagonists cause their targets to lose blood such that they notionally die. Both abrogate the power of women by usurping female fertility in favour of a “second birth” through purely male agency. Both protagonists achieve this resurrection—paradigmatically, at least—by replacing young female blood with elder male blood,⁷⁷ the latter being ingested by the victim/novice or applied to their skin. And, lastly, both of the resulting rites of passage confer a new and irrevocable identity on the junior party, one that removes them from the ephemeral “female” world of perishable flesh and inducts them into the immutable “male” world of the ancestors and the tomb, a quintessentially masculine domain in which they are symbolically (for initiates) or physically (for vampires) granted victory over death.

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me, and I am master. . . . I have been so long master that I would be master still – or at least that none other should be master of me.” Stoker, *Dracula*, 31–32.

76. Once again, readers are expressly warned against misrepresenting such parallels as justification for negatively portraying male elders from indigenous tribal societies as vampiric, evil or inhuman. To do so would be both obnoxious and inane.
77. In myth, the stolen blood is always female in origin; it represents the birth-giving power of the mother, which is then appropriated by the father. In ritual initiations, the stolen blood is physically that of the boys, but—as the neophytes are still children and thus identified with their mothers—it is notionally female. Moreover, the blood is typically shed as a result of penile circumcision and/or sub-incision; not only is genital bleeding normally a marker of femininity (Evans, “Rites of Initiation,” 136) but sub-incision yields “ouverture du pénis explicitement assimilée à un vagin” (an opening of the penis that is explicitly assimilated to a vagina). Testart, “Rhombes et des *tjurunga*,” 6m12. Likewise, there is gender slippage when the canonical male vampire attacks a man; the feminisation that penetration and bleeding imputes to the victim is obvious. On the male homoerotic themes in *Dracula*, see Maurice Hindle, introduction to Stoker, *Dracula*, xxviii–xxx; and Christopher Craft, “‘Kiss Me with Those Red Lips’: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*,” *Representations* 8 (Fall 1984): 107–33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2928560>.

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Notes on Contributors

SIMON BACON is an independent scholar specialising in vampires and horror. His recent works include *1000 Vampires on Screen*, *Contagion and the Vampire: The Vampiric Body as Locus of Disease and Global Epidemics in 21st Century*, and the essay collection “*Nosferatu*” in *the 21st Century: A Critical Study*, all published in 2023. EMAIL: baconetti@googlemail.com

ANDREW M. BOYLAN is Assistant Editor of the *Journal of Vampire Studies*, Deputy President of the Vampire Studies Association and author of *The Media Vampire: A Study of Vampires in Fictional Media* (2012). He regularly updates his vampire movie/book review blog *Taliesin Meets the Vampires* (<https://taliesinttlg.blogspot.com/>) and dabbles in vampire fiction. EMAIL: taliesinloki@yahoo.co.uk

RHONDA BROCK-SERVAIS is a Professor of English at Longwood University. Her research interests include the Gothic, horror, the history of childhood, and young adult literature or some combination thereof. She was the Division Head for Gothic and Horror in the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts for almost a decade. EMAIL: brockservaisrl@longwood.edu

FABIO CAMILLETTI is a professor at the University of Warwick’s School of Modern Languages and Cultures, and specialist in Gothic and Romantic literature. He written extensively on twentieth-century Italian occulture (including the 1960s Dracula craze), co-edited a collection on Emilio De Rossignoli and authored *Italia lunare: Gli anni Sessanta e l’occulto* (2018). EMAIL: F.Camilletti@warwick.ac.uk

ÁLVARO GARCÍA MARÍN is an Assistant Professor of Translation and Interpretation at the University of Málaga, and author of *Historias del vampiro griego* (2017). He specialises in Modern Greek studies and the vampire in history and literature, both overlapping in his upcoming anthology *The Vampire of Vourla, and Other Forgotten Greek Vampire Stories*. EMAIL: agmarin@uma.es

LLOYD D. GRAHAM is an independent researcher with an interdisciplinary interest in cultural anthropology. His focus is the nexus of magic, mythology and religion in the ancient and modern world. He has seventy+ publications in peer-reviewed literature, and wrote an Academia.edu paper proposing a novel explanation for the efficacy of garlic against vampires. EMAIL: lgr89617@hotmail.com.

ANTHONY HOGG is Editor of the *Journal of Vampire Studies*; President and founder of the Vampire Studies Association; Editor-in-Chief of Lord Ruthven Award-winning website, *Vamped* (<https://vamped.org>); helped organise There Are Such Things! Vampire Studies Symposium 2015 held at Corinth, Texas; and blogs as *The Vampirologist* (<https://thevampirologist.wordpress.com>). He lives in Melbourne. EMAIL: thevampirologist@gmail.com

J. GORDON MELTON is the Distinguished Professor of American Religious History (retired) at the Institute for Studies of Religion, Baylor University. Primarily known

for his religious studies, he is also an active participant in Dracula and vampire studies. His most recent vampire book, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*, was published in 2021. EMAIL: JGordon_Melton@baylor.edu

PAUL MURRAY is a writer and former Irish diplomat, including service as Ambassador to South and North Korea and OECD/UNESCO. He is the author of *From the Shadow of "Dracula": A Life of Bram Stoker* (2004) and also edited *The Japanese Ghost Stories of Lafcadio Hearn* (2019) for the Penguin Classics series. EMAIL: paul999murray@gmail.com

CAROL A. SENF is Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies in the School of Literature, Media, and Communication at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Her books include *The Vampire in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (1988), *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism* (1998), *Science and Social Science in Bram Stoker's Fiction* (2002) and *Bram Stoker* (2010). EMAIL: carol.senf@lmc.gatech.edu

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